A STUDY OF THE SINICIZATION POLICY OF EMPEROR XIAOWEN
OF THE NORTHERN WEI DYNASTY

The amalgamation of the Chinese and the nomadic barbarians on the northern frontier regions of China had been an ever-present phenomenon in Chinese history. This author's effort is only concentrated on the sinicization policy of Emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝) of the Northern Wei Dynasty (北魏) (471 A.D. - 499 A.D.). Emperor Xiaowen Belonged to the Toba (拓跋) clan of the Hsien-pei (鮮卑) people. This essay, is divided into four parts, and its essentials are as follows:

1) An analysis of the factors that caused Emperor Xiaowen to adopt a full-scale policy of sinicization. Together with the political, economic, cultural and other reasons, Emperor Xiaowen's personal preference to Chinese culture was also analysed;

2) A delineation of all the measures taken by Emperor Xiaowen for his goal. He adopted the economic and administrative policies of the preceding Former and later Han Dynasties, and the Chinese cultural and behavioral patterns were mostly accepted;

3) The positive and negative influences of the sinicization policy were also evaluated. Emperor Xiaowen had actually blended the cultures of the northern barbarians and the
Chinese together. He changed the social customs and structure of his semi-nomadic Hsien-pei people and improved the techniques of their economic production. He also promoted the standard of living of the Toba clan. On the other hand, Xiaowen's sinicization also had some negative influences. It caused the members of the royal clan to become more extravagant and the army become more corrupt. Those Toba noble men who followed Xiaowen to Lo-yang (洛陽) were sinicized, while those remaining in the northern frontier (北鎮) regions retained their traditional barbaric culture. Thus the clan was split into two hostile groups;

4) The author's conclusion is that although Xiaowen's sinicization policy was not wholly successful, the positive influences should be praised. From this study, the author thinks that the cultural characteristics of a nation are very important. China's particular norms and styles of culture are one of the major reasons which made the Chinese as a race "unconquerable" by the barbarians since the ancient times.

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